Selfridge Field,
Building #122,(Boiler House BG) (Heating Plant)
North of Wilbur Wright between Walnut and Birch Streets
~~Harrison Township~~, Mt. Clemens Vicinity
Macomb County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-116-AAA

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GREAT LAKES SYSTEMS OFFICE
1709 JACKSON STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-2571

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SELFRIDGE FIELD, HAER No. MI-116-AAA
BUILDING #122,(BOILER HOUSE BG)
(Heating Plant)

Location: North of Wilbur Wright Boulevard between Walnut and Birch Streets
Selfridge Air National Guard Base
Mt. Clemens vicinity, Macomb County, Michigan
U.S.G.S. Mount Clemens East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.350710.4718820

Significance: This building represents the functional component of the permanent base construction Cantonment district initiated during the late 1920s and early 1930s and was designed to complement the Georgian Revival noncommissioned and commissioned officers housing.

Description: This building is a rectangular plan, 43 foot by 25 foot, steel framed, two-story, front-gabled structure with brick curtain walls executed in common bond and shielded by an asphalt shingle roof. The building is distinguished by its parapeted gables and masonry coping. The fenestration provides a generally symmetrical appearance on the west (front) and south elevations, but the piercing pattern of the north and east elevations is determined by purely functional considerations. All four elevations display steel casement windows with steel plate lintels and concrete sills, while steel access is through steel panel entry doors. The roof line is broken by four large steel stacks, corresponding to the four boilers within, and numerous smaller steel pipes and vents.

The street level of the facade (west) elevation consists of five bays defined by a corner steel pedestrian entry door shielded by a steel drip hood and four single casement windows. The three bays of the second story, accessed by a functional steel stairway, are defined by a central pedestrian entry door flanked by double steel casement windows.

The south elevation is comprised of five symmetrical bays. The ground floor is comprised of three single casement windows and two steel pedestrian entry doors, while the second story presents five triple casement windows, creating a nearly continuous bank of glass to light the building's interior.

The north (rear) elevation is an expanse of brick rising to the

parapeted gable coping, pierced only by a double corner casement window occurring above a double steel pedestrian entry door in the building's northeast corner. Ash conveyers also leave the building's northeast corner to carry ash to the three-story-tall, 125 ton capacity, ash silo located adjacent to Building 122's north elevation. This cylindrical steel device was added to the building during the 1974 renovations. A double coal silo (200 ton capacity), composed of two adjacent circular footprint cylinders constructed of concrete and steel reinforcing rods, occurs east of the building. The silos are connected to the boiler room by a grate covered coal hopper below grade, which is linked to an elevator that carries the coal into chutes connected to stokers leading to boilers in the plant. After combustion, the coal ash settled into a vacuum system where it was taken by another elevator into the ash silo where it is stored until removed.

Solid masonry bays, pierced only a central pedestrian entry, comprise the building's purely functional north elevation. This rank comprised the coal bunkers, where fuels was brought by conveyors from the coal silos and then directed by underfeed chutes from the bunkers to the boilers. The fenestration of the second story is purely functional, and consists of steel casement windows.

The interior consists primarily of the boiler room (36 feet x 18.5 feet), currently occupied by fur boilers and associated machinery, such as water softeners, condensers, and control panels. Adjacent and north of the two story boiler room is the single story former coal bunker (6.5 feet by 41.5 feet) that has been converted into storage rooms, a workshop area and offices. The western bays of the building are composed of a rank of rooms (7 feet in width), comprised, south to north, of a reinforced concrete (breeching) pit in the southwest corner, a toilet, and an office. A storage room in the northwest corner is located in part of the former coal bunker. The second floor of the building consists of two 7-foot-wide workrooms located above the first floor rank of small rooms.

This building has undergone extensive renovations, most significantly, the replacement of the original six 1932 boilers and

associated mechanicals with four larger boilers during renovations in the 1974. During these renovations, the south wall of the boiler room was demolished to allow the new boilers to be installed, and all equipment was replaced. The roof line was also altered after a partial collapse. The building silhouette was originally composed of a louvered wood ridge vent/clerestory, but now comprised of a standard gable ridge with roof planes pierced by a series of steel vents and stacks.

History: The "Boiler House - BG," was erected near the southwest corner of the original base in 1931 from Office of the Constructing Quartermaster plans. It was constructed as part of the first major base improvement program and provided heat to the original portion of Selfridge Field. The original boiler room equipment has been removed, but with updated boilers, this building continued in service until 1997.

Building #122 was run in three shift around the clock during the Selfridge heating season, and was overhauled every year between May and September. The boiler house provided support for the Cantonment district, the core of Selfridge, built between 1927 and 1934. These buildings replaced the frame, temporary buildings that were the hallmark of the original Selfridge Field, dating to ca. 1917 to 1918. Stylistically, all are substantial brick buildings, with all but the most functional structures displaying strong references to the Georgian Revival style.

This complex of buildings was built at the core of the original Selfridge Air National Guard Base and today is still the most distinctive cluster of architecture on base. The brick structures present today form a consistent entity of Georgian Revival architecture.

Buildings in the Cantonment area played a significant part in Selfridge's role as a training base during the war. The base expanded outward spatially and the number of base structures mushroomed rapidly during the war. Still, the Cantonment District provided a structural, functional, and stylistic anchor for the base.

The architectural and functional "core" of Selfridge, the original

base, constructed prior to World War II, presents a virtually unique resource in Michigan. Few airfields that were exclusively military in genesis were built in the state and Selfridge is the oldest and best preserved example of its type.

Sources:

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Copy of construction drawing, dated May 28, 1974, Selfridge ANG Base, Civil Engineering, in possession of Selfridge Base Museum, Mt. Clemens, Michigan. Conversion/Alteration of Existing Heating Plants, Mechanical, Demolition, Building 122, Plan No. SLF 140-108, Sheet 12 of 29.

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Interview, Colonel Robert Stone (Ret.), Curator, Selfridge Base Museum, October 13, 1995.

Interview, William O'Connor, Selfridge Mechanical Section, July 8, 1997.

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